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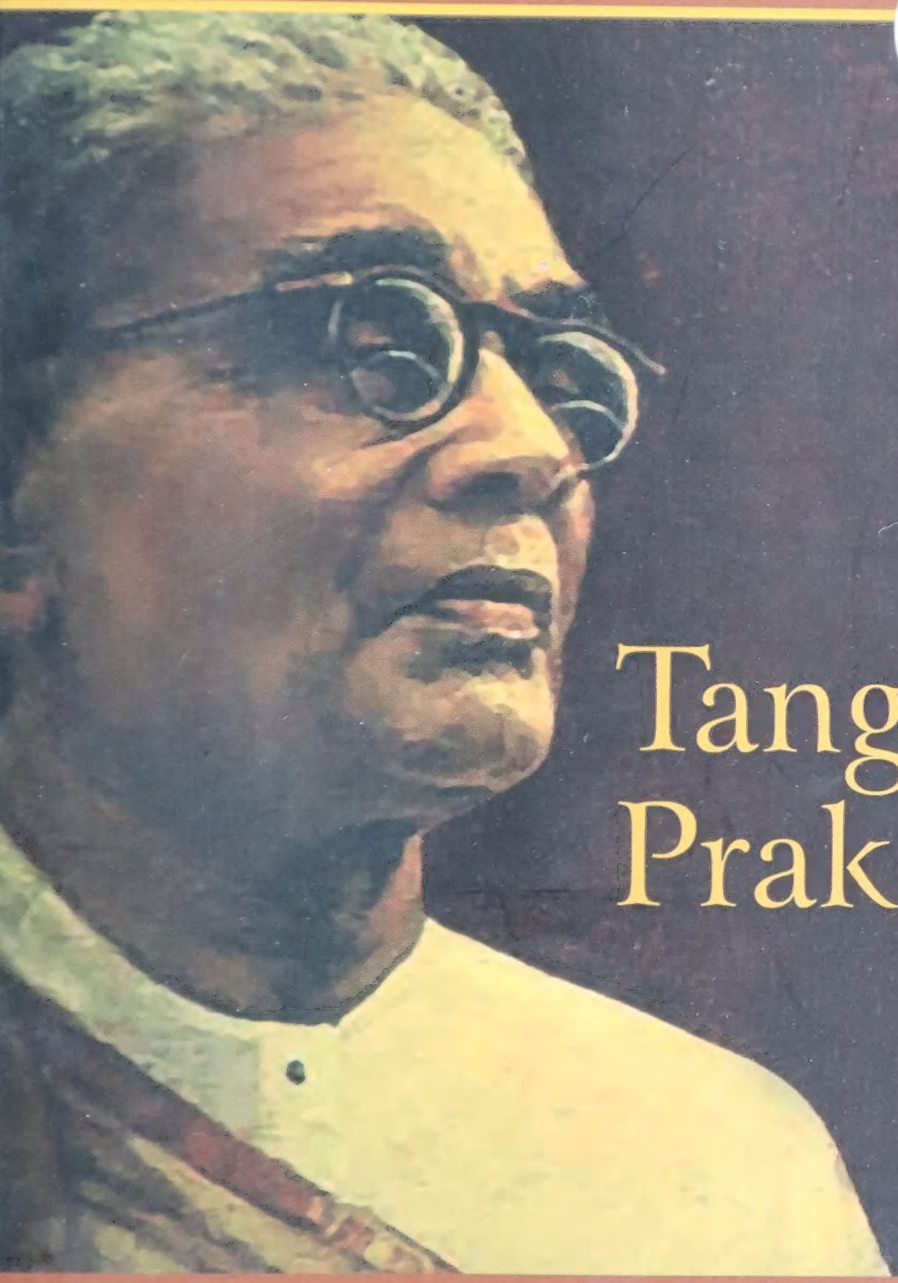
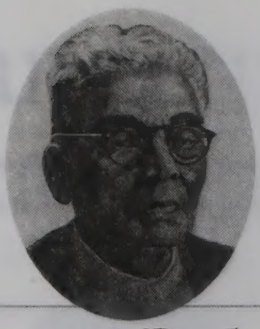


Tanguturi Prakasam

P RAJESWARA RAO

Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu (1872-1957) was a valiant freedom fighter, a true patriot, statesman and a lawyer of repute. Popularly known as 'Andhra Kesari' (Lion of Andhra) he started a newspaper *Swarajya* to make ideals of Satyagraha reach the common people. He spread the message of nationalism and Swaraj in Andhra Pradesh and beyond. He became the Chief Minister of the Madras Presidency in 1946 and subsequently the first Chief Minister of the new Andhra State in 1953. This book brings to light the story of his selfless service and historic contribution.



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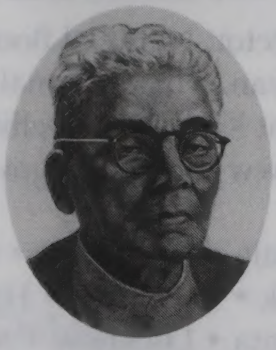

P Rajeswara Rao

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Foreword

The national movement generated a new life and enthusiasm in the country and brought forward outstanding men and women who contributed their best for the freedom of the country and its development. This reached its peak during the last stages of the movement under Gandhiji's leadership when the message of non-co-operation penetrated every nook and corner and the demand for *Swaraj* reached the masses.

Every province produced important and great leaders. Shri T. Prakasam was one of the great leaders of Andhra Pradesh and was known as the Lion of Andhra. Not much is known about him or his achievements for spreading the message of nationalism and *Swaraj* not in Andhra Pradesh and also practically throughout the South. His was a remarkable and distinguished life both

in the fields of professional and national work where his sacrifices, his intelligence and other great qualities made a permanent impact.

Shri Rajeswara Rao has provided in this book a brief sketch of the life of this great public figure of Andhra Pradesh. He has done a good deal of research for preparing this book. We are grateful to Shri T. Vishwanatbam, who was a close colleague and admirer of Prakasam, for going through the book and making suggestions.

NEW Delhi — B. V. KESKAR
January 1, 1972

1 PARENTAGE AND CHILDHOOD

It takes centuries of life to create a little history and centuries of history to create enduring tradition. There is no denying the fact that certain communities in our country established traditions of character and capacity, service and sacrifice. In this respect, the Niyogi sect constituting a minority among Andhra Brahmins can compare favourably with the Parsis, the Chitpavans, the Kashmiri Pandits and the Saraswats. Most of the Telugu poets from ancient times were Niyogis. As hereditary *karnams* (village officers), they proved born administrators. At higher levels they provided *dewans* and commanders to the ruling dynasties. It is significant that Prakasam was an ideal representative of this community.

His ancestors originally belonged to the village of Tanguturu holding there the hereditary post of *karnam* with considerable property. The father of Prakasam, Gopalakrishnayya, married Subbamma, a woman of vision and wisdom, and their eldest son, Prakasam, was born on 23August 1872.

Soon owing to famine and the marriage of his two sisters, the family was hard hit economically. Prakasam attended a Pial School at Valluru under coercion in those days. His father was obliged to leave the village to seek service in the Venkatagiri Estate and the boy was sent to the village Addanki where the husband of his eldest sister was running a school. He was successfully controlled and imparted the necessary basic education in two years. When his father succeeded at last in securing the post of a petty Revenue Official on a salary of eight rupees a month at Menakuru, the family was shifted to Nayudupeta. There was a Government school where English was taught. Prakasam continued his studies there and assisted his father in preparing the revenue accounts.

The Venkatagiri Estate then had a hierarchy of officials. As the salaries were low and bribery and corruption were rampant, his upright and honest father lost his job twice and only with great difficulty did he manage to get reinstated. Besides English, Prakasam studied Urdu in the company of a Muslim friend. He always had two sets of friends: rowdies and the

well-behaved. He was often punished for teasing the teacher and finally rusticated. On the intervention of the local Deputy Collector at his father's request, he was, however, taken back to the school. Again, when he tore to pieces the English textbook of a senior student being unable to retaliate physically, he was once more rusticated. Again he was lucky, and the same Deputy Collector came to his rescue. Prakasam used to take physical exercise, play cricket and ride elephants of the Estate. Thus, on the whole, he led an active, happy and carefree life. On the transfer of his father to Mallam, the family had to shift, leaving him under the care of a woman. In the meantime, their family lands at Valium were auctioned for non-payment of revenue, and the family lost the village *Karnam's* post.

The passing away of his father when Prakasam was in his eleventh year was a severe blow to the family. His youngest brother was yet to be born, and his mother, who had now to bear the burden of the family, had no ostensible means of doing so. His maternal uncle, in spite of his meagre means, took them all to Vinodarayudupalem. His mother did not like to become a burden to her brother. Casting aside the traditional social values, she decided to run a boarding house at Ongole to give her sons the benefit of English education. In spite of the fact that hoteliering in those days was regarded as one of the most degrading professions, she took the bold step. Prakasam was admitted to the local Government

School. He passed the middle school examination in the first division at the age of twelve. Yet he had not been able to leave bad company. The bad boys once committed a theft, were caught red-handed, but were luckily let off.

At about this time, on seeing some Hindi dramas staged by a Poona company, Prakasam's attention was drawn towards the stage. Undavalli Saheb and E. Hanumantha Rao Naidu, who were teachers in the local Mission School, also had an abiding interest in drama. They felt naturally very benevolently inclined towards him. Endowed with an attractive personality, a well-proportioned body and a fair complexion, Prakasam was highly successful in playing female roles as well. Yet, even now, poverty dogged his footsteps relentlessly. He was obliged to take help from others to purchase books. In spite of his most earnest efforts, he could not get three rupees to pay the fee for a Public Examination. His mother had to pawn her silk sari to raise this amount.

Having often seen pleaders wearing black coats arguing cases and earning plenty of money at the court of law in front of his house, he longed to enter the legal profession even as a boy. He developed great liking for the black long coat and somehow managed to get one stitched for himself. Though his means did not justify such an ambition in his life, he was determined to achieve the impossible by dint of his tenacity, grim determination, firm conviction and strong character.

2

TO RAJAHMUNDRY

Rajahmundry at the close of the last century was to what Poona (now Pune) was to Maharashtra, Calcuttta (now Kolkata) to Bengal (now West Bengal), Patna to Bihar and Allahabad (now Prayagraj) to Uttar Pradesh. It was here that Adikavi Nannayya commenced translating the *Mahabharata,* imparting to it stature of an original work which his worthy emutated. He represented the spirit of India insofar as Telugu literature was concerned, in the same way Shakespeare represented England, Goethe Germany, Pushkin Russia and Ferdowsi Persia. Rajahmundry is situated on the banks of the mighty Godavari whose water is stimulating to the mind and soothing to the heart and is hallowed by the presence of Mahadeva. The British Government thought it fit to establish the first college in Andhra here, as it was the

birthplace of all literary, cultural, social and political movements.

Naturally Prakasam was fascinated by the past glories and future prospects of Rajahmundry; he even made an unsuccessful attempt to visit it in the company of his friends. Hanumantha Rao Naidu, to whom he was devoutly attached, was an ideal teacher. Though a mere matriculate himself, he was capable of teaching English and mathematics even to college students. Under his guidance, Prakasam passed his middle school examination in the first division. At this age many of his relatives persuaded him to seek service and thus lighten the burden on his mother. But he was bent on pursuing higher studies to become a lawyer. His mother also backed the proposal in spite of the difficulty to find the necessary funds. Naidu kindly recommended him to the missionary at Ongole who admitted him to the next higher class as a free student. There he studied in the pre-matric again under the guidance of Naidu.

Though Naidu belonged to Kottapatnam, a nearby village, all his relatives belonged to Rajahmundry and most of them were well placed in life. He was finding it very difficult to manage his affairs on the petty salary of thirty rupees per month. Burdened with a large family and having a charitable disposition, he was always involved in debts which became quite embarrassing. His wife persuaded him to accompany her to Rajahmundry to seek the help of her relatives.

Prakasam expressed a desire to accompany him. But Naidu was doubtful whether the boy's mother would agree to his going to a far-off place with a stranger. She did resist in the beginning but at last she yielded on the assurance of Naidu that he would look after the boy well during the journey and bring him back at the end of the summer vacation. In those days there was no railway link between Ongole and Rajahmundry. The journey had to be performed by bullock-cart through hilly tracts and forests infested with robbers. They reached the destination after two weeks' continuous journey.

Having seen the places of interest at Rajahmundry, Prakasam wanted to return to Ongole alone since Naidu got a job as a teacher in a local school there. But he missed the boat that was to take him upto Vijayawada. So he had to return. On seeing him back Naidu was overjoyed and urged him to pursue his studies at Rajahmundry, promising to take care of all his needs. He cheerfully agreed, and it proved to be a turning point in his life.

To all appearances, this is just an accident. But then, there is more in this life than meets the eye. It is a mysterious fabric woven out of chance, fate and character. Naidu got him admitted to a local school and also secured a scholarship for him. While his mother felt unhappy at the separation from her son, she ultimately felt reconciled in the hope that the boy would flourish under the protecting wings of his kind teacher.

3 LIFE AT RAJAHMUNDRY

As time passed, Prakasam's fascination for drama became more pronounced. There were not only good actors around him but also an eminent author and playwright, C. Lakshmi Narasimham, who later came to be known as the blind bard of Andhra, who could produce an outstanding script in no time. Prakasam's active participation in dramas as also in street brawls picked up with rowdies belonging to the scum of society led to his failure at the Matriculation Examination. However, he appeared privately subsequently, and passed it.

Then he married Hanumayamma, not because he was ripe for marriage but because he desired to fulfil the last wish of his late sister who was very dear to him. Afterwards, he returned to Rajahmundry and joined

the local Government Arts College with the help of his benefactor, Naidu. There he made friends with K. V. Reddy Naidu who later became a prominent leader of the Justice Party and occupied a number of positions of responsibility, including the Governorship of Madras. Political differences never led to personal estrangement and they continued to be good friends all through. K. Ramachandra Rao, his affluent friend, stood by him in thick and thin throughout his life.

When Prakasam accompanied the drama troupe of Naidu to Kakinada, he was beaten by a rowdy of that place at night. He bided his time to retaliate when the rowdy came to Rajahmundry and beat him in broad daylight. Though a criminal case was launched against him, he was acquitted. Otherwise, the course of his life would have been totally different. At college, he was studious and became a favourite of Principal Metcalf. Prakasam's rashness often involved him in brawls with his class fellows.

In spite of financial straits, Naidu was generous enough to send Prakasam to Madras to realise the dream of his childhood to don the robes of a lawyer. Prakasam became a second grade pleader. On his return he casually stopped for a short period at Ongole and successfully conducted some criminal cases. His friends and relatives tried to persuade him to settle down there as a pleader. But he decided to return to Rajahmundry and be useful to Naidu who was his Godfather.

Though there were a number of lawyers with higher qualifications and a longer standing at Rajahmundry, Prakasam picked up considerable work within a few months and at the same time set up high standards of integrity and dignity. He charged his clients more than his seniors and worked strenuously and successfully in tough cases. His reputation spread far and wide and his services were requisitioned in important cases at other centres too. Naturally his meteoric rise in the profession evoked the envy of some of his colleagues who cleverly implicated him in a perjury case. But he was honourably acquitted by a civilian judge who was not well disposed towards him in an earlier case.

Lord Ripon initiated local self-government with the best of intentions. In spite of the fact that there was too much of parochialism and selfishness and too little of good government, the occasion provided a training ground for leadership. Rajahmundry was the earliest town to have a municipality. Though most of its early chairmen were Government servants, gradually, the non-official element found its way into it. King makers who delight in exercising power indirectly appeared on the scene. None could get into office, much less remain in it for long, without their support. Prakasam attracted their attention, but he never played second fiddle to them and quickly consolidated his position. When the local Sub-Collector coveted the chairmanship of the Municipality at the instance of a frustrated former

chairman, he opposed the move and made him withdraw to facilitate the unanimous election of a non-official.

At the age of thirty, Prakasam was elected Chairman of Rajahmundry Municipality in the face of stiff opposition from some influential elders. Yet these later succeeded in delaying the notification of his election in the *Gazette* for three months and denied him the privilege of exercising his powers of office for that period. In the meantime, they sent petitions against him to the higher authorities. When the Governor visited the place, Prakasam was not even formally introduced to him, and someone else was deputed to present the civic address. Prakasam was not a person to take things lying down. He visited Madras, called on the higher authorities including the Governor and got his election gazetted.

As the first citizen, he evinced keen interest in administration and sanitation. Having failed to dislodge him from office, the frustrated elders tried in vain to implicate him in a murder case. When he was on a professional visit to Madras, Barrister Swaminathan, who was impressed with him, advised him to become a barrister, so that he could rise to his full stature in the High Court. As he was a man of quick decisions and quicker action, he broached the matter to his affluent friend K. Ramachandra Rao and his rich client M. Lakshmandas, and they volunteered to meet the expenditure for his stay in London.

By that time he was a top man both in the profession and the public life of Rajahmundry. Crossing the seas was then regarded as an act of sacrilege. His proposal to go to London naturally raised a hue and cry among his friends and relatives. His mother was particularly perturbed. At that time there were very few barristers in those parts and they were branded as 'dinner barristers' having little knowledge of law. They not only failed in the profession but also took to drink. As a result, there was positive dislike for that course. However, Prakasam assured his mother that he would complete the course without eating non-vegetarian food. He left her with his younger brother Sriramulu who was practising with him and made the necessary preparation for the journey taking with him pickles and batavias to keep his vow to his mother.

4

TRIP TO LONDON

Since the consolidation of British rule in India, higher education in England was regarded as a prerequisite for success in any vocation. Though mere crossing of the English Channel might not bring about added intelligence and efficiency, it gave people an insight into some qualities of the English people such as their love for justice, hatred of indoctrination and sympathy for the underdog. Prakasam boarded the ship at Bombay in November 1904. On reaching Marseilles, the European passengers who were keeping up the demeanour of aristocrats suddenly came down to the level of the common man and carried their own luggage. Impressed with their unassuming behaviour, Prakasam hoped for the dawn of a similar life in India. His co-passenger Chengal Rao Naidu who had already completed one

term of the course briefed him about life in London. On reaching the city, he was his guest for a day and afterwards stayed with an English family as a paying guest, though he cooked his own vegetables and pulses. He joined Grey's Inn to pursue the course.

The capital of India was Calcutta (now Kolkata) till 1911, and most of the students for this course were Bengalis. They were leaders in the legal profession; most of the Law Members to the Government of India hailed from Bengal and were invariably barristers. For the studious, there were ample opportunities. Since Prakasam was earnest about the course and was already equipped with ample experience at the bar in India, he fully utilised the splendid library and watched the proceedings in the courts with keen interest. He regularly attended and took down copious notes. He made friends with a solicitor from Goa and a Parsi barrister who had settled there. They were surprised to learn that he subsisted on a strict vegetarian diet.

Dynamic by temperament, Prakasam could not lead a secluded life and joined the 'India Society' whose object was to win freedom for India. The Society published a weekly named 'India' and often invited leading public men from India to speak under its auspices. Prakasam was aware of the revolutionary activity in Bengal and the daring exploits of patriots there. The agitation led by Lokamanya Tilak and the cases launched against him created a lasting impression on

him. He learnt of the differences between Tilak and Gokhale and the stand taken by Pherozeshah Mehta. The sufferings and sacrifices of Lala Lajpat Rai moved him deeply. The Congress organisation was still young, praying, petitioning and arguing but not protesting or demonstrating. Prakasam dreamt of a unified leadership with the extremist elements in the vanguard.

The leading Indian nationalist in England at that time was Dadabhai Naoroji, who had grown grey in the service of India. Prakasam poured over Naoroji's monumental work *Poverty and un-British Rule in India*, campaigned for him during the election to Parliament and worked as his agent at the polling booth. Others who attracted his attention were Henry Cotton and William Wedderburn, founders of the Indian National Congress and leading lights of the India Society in London. These retired civilians served India with great passion and unsurpassed devotion, and even spent their pension and a part of their property in her cause. With fervour, they nurtured the Indian National Congress and fostered it with parental solicitude and affection. Besides, there were W. C. Bonnerjee, first President of the Indian National Congress and Romesh Chandra Dutt, also a member of that Society.

The Society had a well-equipped library with a number of books on the struggle for freedom and democracy in England, France and America. Prakasam availed himself of the opportunity of browsing in that

library as he was already full of passion to serve the motherland. He attended the funeral of W. C. Bonnerjee and felt unhappy when Romesh Chandra Dutt deplored the spread of extremism and anarchy in Bengal. On one occasion there was a discussion whether Surendranath Banerjee, who was called 'Surrender not' or Gokhale, who was a moderate should be invited as a speaker. He not only met Lala Lajpat Rai but also came in contact with Shyamji Krishna Varma, who was planning to achieve complete independence through a violent revolution. He was editing the 'Indian Sociologist' and giving scholarships in memory of Herbert Spencer. While Prakasam was impressed with his burning patriotism, he refused the scholarship offered by him as the conditions imposed were repugnant to his free spirit. But V. D. Savarkar, V. P. N. Iyer and Madanlal Dhingra who took advantage of those scholarships later became famous revolutionaries.

Prakasam's political preoccupations, however, did not interrupt and he passed the preliminary examination in Roman Law and Constitutional Law creditably. Sankaran Nair, a former President of the Congress and leading lawyer from Madras (now Chennai), also joined Grey's Inn to study the course so that he could become a judge of the High Court as there was some reservation for barristers. Once while they were dining together, Nair ordered champagne. Seeing Prakasam refusing the drink and taking vegetarian food, he remarked that

it would not do at dinners. Some Englishmen jocularly called Prakasam a 'grass-eater'.

But Prakasam continued as a non-confirmist. It was the convention that at a bar dinner, the youngest person should deliver a speech and take the permission of the master to smoke. No one had defied that unwritten law till then. But as a non-smoker, Prakasam flatly refused to comply with the convention. His colleagues were taken aback. He was jeered at. The incident was reported to the master, Sir Arthur Collins, a former Chief Justice of Madras. He had a soft corner for South Indians. When he called Prakasam, he reiterated his stand boldly and asked him whether he had not the right to desist from doing what he detested. The master had to yield.

During his eight months' stay in England, Prakasam visited important cities and universities there. He desired to take a degree in arts as well but gave up the idea as he felt that it would interfere with his legal studies. He made a pilgrimage to the place where Shakespeare was born and was impressed with the way in which the English respected their men of letters. The thought of raising suitable memorials to the great Telugu poets of the past like Nannayya, Tikkana, and Pothana arose in his mind. He resigned from his chairmanship of Rajahmundry Municipality from London and also wrote a letter to Forbes, a member of the Madras government, who had earlier considered him unworthy of the position with the taunt that he was

carefully handing over the Municipality and its funds to him. Forbes took the taunt sportingly, thanked him and sent a letter of introduction to his sister, a landlady at Edinburgh. After completing the first term Prakasam returned to Rajahmundry in July 1905.

It was a surprise to his friends and relatives that there was no change in him whatsoever. In fact, his stay in London had reformed him as he had absorbed the best qualities of the British. They, however, desired that he should undergo ceremonial purification as crossing the seas was considered an act of sacrilege for a Hindu and more so for a Brahmin. He resisted the move and his brother Sriramulu, who was at that time an ardent disciple of Veeresalingam, the great social reformer, stood by him. Further, his friends gave him a reception and dined with him. The orthodox section of the community reported the matter to the Pontiff Shankaracharya and rumours about his excommunication became current. On receiving a registered notice from Shankaracharya asking him to undergo the purificatory ceremony before mixing with society, he sent a reply questioning the Pontiff's competence to command him as neither he nor his forbears had ever recognised his authority.

During his short stay at Rajahmundry between July and October, he resumed his legal practice with redoubled vigour. He successfully handled an important case of a helpless woman and earned a fat fee of seventy thousand rupees.

After returning to London for the second term he regularly attended lectures delivered under the auspices of the Council of Legal Education and also followed important cases that came up before English courts. One such case related to alleged breach of promise by a German prince to marry an English lady. Prakasam was impressed with the able defence put up by the famous Irish barrister, Edward Carson. An important suit filed against Lord Justice Milton by his step-daughter created quite a sensation. Though the Judge as defendant deposed on his own behalf and succeeded in the trial court, Montague who appeared for the plaintiff with his persuasive eloquence won it in appeal. The Press carried on an agitation for the resignation of the Judge as his evidence was not believed.

Prakasam assisted Shepherd, a retired judge of the Madras High Court, in writing a book on the Indian Contract Act. Apart from acknowledging the valuable assistance, Shepherd introduced Prakasam to Rufus Isaac, the leading lawyer who later as Lord Reading became Viceroy and Governor-General of India. When he filed the famous suit against the British Government on behalf of Dalip Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, for rendition of the Punjab, Prakasam ably assisted him by briefing him on matters relating to customs and conventions in India.

N. N. Sarkar who later became Law Member to the Government of India was his rival in studies. While

serving as a District Munsiff, he had come to London for the course. In the end Prakasam not only passed in the first class but also got the certificate of honour and a prize of fifty pounds. The examiner was highly impressed personally and went to Prakasam's room to congratulate him. As Prakasam had lost five hundred rupees deposited in the Arbuthnot Company on account of its failure the prize amount proved very useful to him.

While giving letters of introduction to some of the judges at Madras, Shepherd warned him about the masterminds of Mylapore who might bar his way to success. By that time Muthusami Iyer, the Judge; Bhashyam Iyengar, the Jurist and Subrahmanya Iyer, the Advocate had become almost legendary. While a few European barristers like Norton and Grant made a mark, Indian barristers were nowhere in the picture. Some younger members of the Indian bar like Srinivasa Iyengar, Alladi Venkatrama Sastry and Varadachari were coming to the forefront. The prospects for an Andhra barrister to make an impression were rather dim.

On his return journey, Prakasam visited France, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Greece and Germany. Before he left for England, he used to have a tub bath for all his ailments according to the system of Kuhni of Germany. He took the opportunity of visiting him in his house at Leipzig and discussed with him the details of his system of treatment.

5

MARCH TO MADRAS

The transformation of Madras from a marshy village inhabited by fishermen into a great metropolis is one of the romances of history. The English came to trade and to trade in safety they wanted to build forts. In 1639, the East India Company secured permission from the Raja of Chandragiri, an Andhra chieftain, to build a fort there. In the early years of the present century, Madras was the meeting-place of Andhras, Tamilians, Malayalis and Kannadigas. Outside the Presidency of Madras, as it was then called, all of them were known as Madrasis. Leadership in any vocation at Madras meant recognition throughout the Presidency. Administration in its higher echelons was mostly the preserve of the ruling race. But law provided openings to the intelligent and the adventurous. Tamilians had the advantage of

early English education and held positions of vantage. Andhra lawyers in the districts and even the few that settled at Madras were mostly feeding top-ranking Tamilian lawyers with briefs.

Not heeding the warnings of friends and well-wishers, Prakasam decided to set up practice in the High Court. At that time he had a debt of twenty thousand rupees which he had incurred on his studies at London and for acquiring the necessary library. P. Narayanamurty, another lawyer of calibre, came from Kakinada and both of them were together able to get three-fourths of the work that came from the Andhra region. As a barrister, Prakasam had precedence over High Court vakils and made full use of that right.

He had full confidence in his capacity, never tried to curry the favour of judges and was bold in dealing with them. He thus enjoyed the confidence of his clientele. When he quickly picked up civil and criminal work on the appellate side, the then Chief Justice and a Puisne Judge who had earlier advised him to settle down at some district headquarters were surprised. He was even bracketed with the British barrister, John D. Mayne. Besides, he had an able junior in P. Venkataramana Rao Naidu, who was endowed with a keen memory and was an expert in case law. In the fitness of things, Venkataramana Rao Naidu later became a judge of the Madras High Court and after retirement functioned as the Chief Justice of the Mysore High Court.

On the criminal side, Prakasam conducted the sensational Ash murder case which had a political colour. In 1907 Ash, Collector of Tirunelveli, was shot dead at the railway station. It synchronised with the whirlwind lecture tour of Bipin Chandra Pal, leader of the Vandemataram movement from Bengal, who made a strong appeal to the emotions of his audience. The case was transferred to the Madras High Court and came up before a full Bench. Prakasam defended one of the accused. He asserted his point of view at every step and ultimately his client was awarded a lighter punishment. This case established his reputation as a great criminal lawyer.

He had a number of duels with the Bench. After a senior lawyer became a judge, those who had worked as his juniors thought they had some sort of advantage over others. When the judge, Sir Subrahmanya Iyer, who later renounced his knighthood when Annie Besant was interned and wrote the famous letter to President Wilson urging self-determination for India, asked a lawyer sitting in the court to pick up some reported decision supporting an opposite view, Prakasam retorted that there was no reported case supporting the opposite view and that he was making the statement with a full sense of responsibility after having studied the entire case law on the subject.

Sankaran Nair, another judge who later became a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, once

confronted him with the statement that there was already a decision by the court on the point he was arguing. He instantaneously remarked that there was none and much less by him and silenced the judge. There was a judge who was good at law and bad at appreciation of facts, forgetting the principle that law followed facts. He was accustomed to sleeping on the Bench, particularly when facts were presented. On one occasion while Prakasam was arguing a case, the judge began to sleep. Prakasam threw the records aside and sat down. After waking up the judge asked, "Mr. Prakasam, where are we?" to which he replied, "My Lord, I do not know where we are." After that the judge never slept whenever Prakasam appeared before him.

When he was arguing a batch of appeals, V. Krishnaswami Iyer from the Bench summarily dismissed the first appeal. Then Prakasam began to urge the same points in other appeal one after another elaborately and at length and in details. On being asked why he was repeating, he retorted that since his first appeal was summarily rejected without a patient hearing, he was only expecting the judge again and again to hear his argument with the attention they deserved. Though the judge held against him on the spur of the moment, a fortnight later he reviewed his judgment and allowed the batch of appeals. Prakasam as the editor of the 'Law Times' commended his conduct.

K. Srinivasa Iyengar was a judge of exceptional ability and extraordinary intelligence. When he was on the Bench along with Coutts Trotter, Prakasam happened to argue a case. When Iyengar began to obstruct him continuously, he silenced him with the caustic remark that he was arguing for the other judge and not for him who had already made up his mind. After Prakasam experienced a similar situation before P. R. Sundara Iyer, another judge, he fearlessly described the attitude of the judge in the columns of his 'Law Times' as one full of intellectual dishonesty. It created a flutter among the judges and they even thought of hauling him up for contempt. In that connection, Madhavan Nair, son-in-law of Sankaran Nair, severed his connection with the 'Law Times'. However, realising that Prakasam had not exceeded the limits of fair comment, they dropped the matter. His journal was the terror of the Bench and the bar alike.

He had to deal with civilian judges as well. Some were impatient, while others simply agreed with the lower court and dismissed the appeals. When Munro, a civilian judge, was writing the judgment while Prakasam was still arguing, he protested vehemently. When the judge asked him how he knew, he replied that he guessed by the questions put, the posture of sitting and the manner of writing.

There was an intelligent judge named Napier. He wanted Prakasam to finish his arguments in a criminal

case in ten minutes. On being told that it was not possible, the judge asked him to stop. Then Prakasam grew angry, thumped the table with his bundle of records and shouted that he would not argue any more in his court unless the judge withdrew his offensive observations. At that time Prakasam was the President of the Barristers' Association, though most of its members were senior to him. He got a resolution passed by the Association censuring the conduct of the judge.

V. Krishnaswami Iyer accepted membership of the Governor's Executive Council resigning his judgeship, contrary to the principle of separation of the Executive from the Judiciary. Abdur Rahim, then a judge of the Madras High Court, was expecting a similar appointment in his home State of Bengal. He not only got it but also became Speaker of the Central Legislative Assembly. When Prakasam was arguing a civil appeal, he began to cavil at the point urged by him. Then Prakasam remarked that since he received ample fee from the clients, it was his duty to present the case faithfully and that it was unbecoming on the part of a judge to obstruct or to stifle. Though he criticised V. Krishnaswami Iyer and Abdur Rahim alike in his 'Law Times' for opting to the Executive Council from the Bench, both of them held him in high esteem for his integrity and independence.

His professional reputation spread to the mofussil, and his services were in great demand at all important places from Visakhapatnam to Tiruchirapalli. His day

fee used to range from five hundred to one thousand rupees. He had to remain at Tiruchirapalli for three months at a stretch. He acquired decent bungalows at Ootacamund (now Ooty), Madras (now Chennai), Ongole and Rajahmundry, besides lands and gardens worth lakhs of rupees. In addition, he was engaged by a number of zamindars in important cases relating to adoption, partition and succession to their estates. On two occasions he went to London to appear before the Privy Council. He earned like a prince and spent like a prince. His tremendous success at the Bar was like that of Caesar, who came, who saw, who conquered.

6 HIS PUBLIC LIFE

Whether religion is the opium of the masses or not, public life is certainly the opiate of all patriotic persons, irrespective of race or religion, caste or creed. In a subject country, it becomes almost a religion. The observation of William Blake that religion is politics and politics is brotherhood is significant.

Prakasam was fascinated by the Indian War of Independence of 1857 and as a student was familiar with the Congress and its activities. He had met Swami Vivekananda at Madras as early as 1893, had discussions with him and was inspired by his speeches. Long before he entered public life, he had met Lokamanya Tilak at Poona (now Pune) when he had gone to Bombay (now Mumbai) for professional work. Though orthodox in his religious and social beliefs, Tilak was an extremist

in politics, while Gokhale, the social reformer was a moderate. Their differences, though not fundamental, were mental as well as temperamental. Prakasam was attracted by Tilak and even thought that Gokhale was responsible for the sufferings of Tilak.

Since the Congress was then dominated by the moderates, he was not drawn to it. Moreover, the nationalists then carried on an agitation for petty concessions like holding the examination for the Indian Civil Service in India, separation of the Executive from the Judiciary and more representation in the services and the legislatures. Association with the Congress often paved the way for coveted positions.

Gradually, the repression of nationalist ideas and ideals became pronounced. Shouting of the slogan *Vande-mataram* was penalised. Uttering the word *Swaraj* became a crime. Even the portraits of national leaders were taken away by the police from private places. Yet the moderates, fed on the political diet of Mill on liberty and Morley on compromise, did not lose faith in the British rulers. Imperious Curzon refused to see Henry Cotton soon after he was elected President of the Indian National Congress. And still the moderates were inclined to speak the language of Fox and Pitt on the puppet stage of India.

The Partition of Bengal proved a danger signal. When Bipin Chandra Pal came to Madras in 1907, no prominent public man was prepared to preside over

his lecture. In spite of the risk involved, Prakasam came forward to shoulder the responsibility. Sankaran Nair, a former President of the Congress, warned Pal about dire consequences if he persisted in his emotional oratory. Prakasam admired Bhashyam Iyengar, the then Advocate-General, for advising the Government that the speeches of Pal were emotional and not seditious. Subsequently, Sankaran Nair agreed with his opinion. Thus the episode was closed and Bipin Chandra Pal cut short his lecture tour and returned to Calcutta (now Kolkata).

The Surat session of the Congress attended by Prakasam led to an open split and polarisation of forces between moderates and extremists. The gulf between them widened. The extremists were led by the trio, Bal Pal and Lal (Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai). The moderates were marshalled by Pherozeshah Mehta, Gokhale, and Surendranath Banerjee. Till then Pherozeshah Mehta had been only the kingmaker. Tilak and Lajpat Rai, in spite of their popularity based on suffering and sacrifice admitted into the inner circle of the Congress.

Rash Behari Ghose, the leading lawyer and philanthropist from Bengal, was named President for that session by the moderate faction. Lokamanya Tilak not only opposed the proposal but also proposed Lala Lajpat Rai for the presidentship. Khaparde stood by Tilak. When someone tried to oppose Tilak, it was

believed that Khaparde had hurled his shoe at him. Then the delegates coming from Nagpur armed with *lathis* and shouting 'Tilak Maharaj ki Jai' occupied the stage. In the subsequent melee, chairs and tables were hurled at one another, leading to spilling of some blood. The session abruptly ended in a fiasco. Both the factions were equally responsible as they had come prepared to measure their strength. Though used to such scenes in his youth, Prakasam resented the attitude of V. Krishnaswami Iyer in brow-beating Doraswamy Iyer for heckling Gokhale and supporting Tilak. It was a revolt against moderate leadership leading to the secession of the extremists.

Pherozeshah Mehta, though a moderate, was a great nationalist and the uncrowned King of Bombay. On seeing him for the first time Mahatma Gandhi confessed that he felt small. Naturally Mehta was dejected by the unexpected challenge and the resulting development. But when a European police officer approached him for a report, he simply asked him to clear out. However, the Congress organisation was in the hands of moderates. They held the next session at Madras with Rash Behari Ghose as President and wanted to make the best use of the Minto-Morley reforms. Prakasam followed these developments with keen interest. After serving six years' imprisonment for sedition, Tilak returned to Poona with a halo around him and organised the Home Rule League.

Annie Besant as the head of the Theosophical Society along with Wadia and Arundale established a similar organisation and started 'New India', a daily, to propagate her views. Very soon it became a powerful organ of public opinion. Ultimately, both of them merged into a composite organisation and attracted stalwarts like Jinnah, Sapru, the Nehrus (Father and son); C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer and others. When the first World War broke out, many a nationalist envisaged India's opportunity in Britain's difficulties. Though Prakasam was moved and used to discuss men and matters with G. Subrahmanya Iyer, who was the founder-editor of 'The Hindu', he did not take a leading part in the Home Rule agitation as he had no faith in the leadership of Mrs. Besant. His friend C. R. Das too refused to toe her line.

The Muslims, who lagged behind in education and in political, economic and social progress, naturally envied the better lot of the Hindus. They were encouraged by the British rulers to put pressure for their share. The result was the formation of the Muslim League. To stem the rising tide of Muslim communalism, the need to compose the differences in the ranks of the nationalists was realised. After the passing away of Gokhale, Tilak attended the Lucknow session of the Congress and set his seal of approval to the Lucknow Pact. The Congress was thus re-united and Annie Besant was elected President of the next session.

Simultaneously, the Non-Brahmin movement also raised its head in the South. Big movements often have small beginnings. T. M. Nair, one of the protagonists of the Non-Brahmin movement which culminated in the formation of the Justice Party, was a public-spirited doctor with service as his motto. He was elected as a councillor of the Madras Corporation from Triplicane which was mostly inhabited by Brahmins. As he was keen about public health, he had orders issued banning washing of clothes in public tanks. The Brahmins resented his action and got him defeated at the following election. P. Tyagaraya Chetty, another leader of the Justice Party, used to say that he was not against the religious Brahmin but against the political Brahmin who exploited the backward people. The British rulers who were anxious to divide and rule were in need of a communal party to support them and grasped the opportunity and granted separate representation and weightage to the non-Brahmins on population basis though they were in a preponderating majority. The Justice Party was thus enabled to enjoy power continuously for nearly two decades.

Looking back, one finds that most of the leaders of the Justice Party were erstwhile Congressites. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, who advocated separate and sovereign Dravidastan, was for some time the President of the Tamil Nadu Provincial Congress Committee. P. Varadarajulu Naidu and S. Ramanathan were also

prominent Congressites. Even R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu, C. R. Reddy and R. K. Shanmukham Chetty drifted into its fold for a while yet it can be asserted that all of them had many friends among Brahmins and helped them in spite of ideological differences. Most of the zamindars entered the party to safeguard their vested interests. But their advisers and Dewans continued to be Brahmins. Thus the emergence of the Justice Party was the outcome of a variety of reactions and repercussions.

The Andhra region was favourably situated in this respect. In Telangana, which was under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad, the real problem was Hindu *versus* Muslim. Brahmins in Andhra were less conservative and in some ways more progressive. They led literary and social reform movements. The pioneers in Harijan uplift were Brahmins long before Gandhi came on the scene. The Kshatriyas and Vaishyas of Andhra though technically classed as non-Brahmins were akin to Brahmins sacerdotally. Like sugar mixed in milk, Telugu Brahmins were intertwined with the people in many ways. When Andhra-Ratna Gopala Krishnayya, a stormy petrel in Congress politics who preached Brahminisation of society, was left in the lurch, J. Kuppuswami Chowdary, a prominent leader of the Justice Party, came to his rescue. Though K.V. Reddy Naidu fulminated against the Brahmin and the Congress on the public platform, in private life he was

just and even generous to Brahmin and never permitted politics to sway his personal relations. Hence, when the Justice Party crumbled in the wake of all-round political consciousness no one was sorry. Later the cult of hatred spread among non-Brahmins threatening mutual destruction. The creation of a vested interest in backwardness prevented healthy competition and retarded the pace of progress.

Though Prakasam was a Brahmin by birth, his earliest and most intimate contacts were with non-Brahmins. They literally built his career brick by brick. No one understood and benefited by their generosity and comradeship more than he. His well-to-do non-Brahmin friend K. Ramachandra Rao and his non-Brahmin junior B. Venkatramayya Naidu gladly met all his demands with pleasure even after joining the Justice Party and their personal loyalty remained intact. Thus Prakasam was placed in a peculiarly favourable position to assume the unchallenged leadership of the Andhras. No one ever attributed casteism or other motives to him.

7 PLUNGE INTO NATIONAL STRUGGLE

Having seen Mahatma Gandhi dressed in Western style at the Westminster Palace Hotel, Prakasam was surprised to see him in typical Gujarati dress at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1917. He attended the Bombay session in 1918 and joined hands with Tilak and C. R. Das on important issues. At the Amritsar session in 1919, he supported the resolution on self-government moved by C. R. Das. He became a member of the Committee presided over by Tilak to carry on propaganda for the Congress in foreign countries. The passing away of Tilak in 1920 created a void in national leadership. Gandhi as the disciple of Gokhale should have succeeded him as President of the Servants of India Society. But he made a willing surrender in favour of V. S. Srinivasa Sastry whom he

regarded as his elder brother in many respects. With the acceptance of Gandhi's programme of non-violent non-cooperation in the light of his success in South Africa, a favourable situation was created at the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920 for the emergence of Gandhi as the sole national leader. The way was cleared and the vacuum was filled, Gandhi having fascinated one and all by his precept and his example.

Prakasam signed the satyagraha pledge and suspended his lucrative practice and an assured place on the Bench in October 1921 with no thought for the morrow. He was elected the General Secretary of the Congress in 1921 at the Ahmedabad session of the Congress. He took kindly to the crowd and the crowd took kindly to him, was always in it and never liked to be separated from it. In 1922, he organised a mammoth demonstration by thirty thousand Congress volunteers at Guntur when the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee visited that place. The powers-that-be hesitated to arrest him for fear of further trouble. He addressed a number of public meetings at different places in defiance of the official ban. When there was the Moplah rebellion in Malabar leading to the promulgation of martial law and outsiders were prevented from visiting that place Prakasam violated the ban for which his bungalow at Ooty was attached. He also visited the Punjab in connection with the Akali Satyagraha and the Hindu-Muslim riots in Multan. Whenever and

wherever there was any popular movement or trouble, he was invariably present in the thick of it to stand by the people. It can be truly said of him that he stepped out of Plutarch's gallery of indomitable men.

At that time, the Congress trio in Andhra comprised of Venkatappayya, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Prakasam representing the soul, the brain and the driving-force. Nageswara Rao supplied the necessary grease for its smooth working. Unfortunately, there was neither cooperation nor collaboration between them. The greatest misfortune to themselves as well as to the province was that each ploughed his lonely furrow. Gandhi held Venkatappayya in highest esteem, as he was the earliest to throw in his lot with him with no reservations. Naturally Venkatappayya as an orthodox Gandhian was a no-changer opposing Council entry. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was content to function on the intellectual plane as the 'Brahmin Bhashyakar (commentator) of Bania Sutrakar (Gandhi)'. Prakasam was no doubt an ardent Gandhian but was of the protestant type. He felt more at home in the company of Srinivasa Iyengar, C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru who favoured Council entry.

Having had professional contacts earlier with the masses and the classes alike, Prakasam had roots throughout his native province. His headlong plunge into the national struggle consolidated and strengthened his position. He had the unique distinction of being

elected President of the Andhra Provincial Conference thrice. He spoke slowly and with the calm accent of finality. Behind his soft voice there were rock-like self-confidence and unalterable determination, irrespective of consequences. His approach was fundamental, clear-cut and categorical. His daring and dynamism were equalled by few and surpassed by none. He had not only admirers but also fervent devotees who were prepared to follow him wherever he went. Many deemed it a privilege to be by his side, whatever the sacrifices. Though he was middle-aged by the time he plunged into the national struggle, he symbolised youth with its flexibility of mind, spirit of adventure and eagerness to improve upon the past. He was impulsive and emotional. While recognising that change was the law of life, he endeavoured to harness the enthusiasm, the exuberance and the energy of youth for constructive purposes. In short, he combined in himself buoyancy, idealism and impetuosity. There was no open challenge to his leadership in spite of some grumbling and manipulation behind the scenes.

When the ban on council entry was removed by the Congress in 1926 he contested for the Central Assembly and defeated the Liberal stalwart M. Ramachandra Rao with a thumping majority of eleven thousand votes. Earlier, he was sporting enough to propose to his rival that he would withdraw from the contest, if the latter signed the Congress pledge. During the hectic election

campaign he took no rest himself and gave none to the voters and supporters in all the constituencies of Andhra and secured all-round success to his party.

The Central Assembly presided over by Vithalbhai Patel was adorned by stalwarts like Madan Mohan Malaviya, Srinivasa Iyengar, Motilal Nehru, A. Rangasami Iyengar, M. A. Jinnah, M. R. Jayakar, G. D. Birla, B. S. Moonje, Bhai Paramananda and others. Prakasam occupied his due place in the galaxy and evinced keen interest in the legislative business. He gave no quarter to the British rulers. When the Home Member to the Government of India telephoned to invite him to tea, presumably to get some information, he simply asked him to shut up. Subsequently, a common friend told the Home Member that he would have received a rebuff if he had dared to invite him in person as there was an implied ban on social contacts between the fighting Congressites and the imperial rulers.

The most important landmark in his heroic career came when the Simon Commission, appointed to report on our Constitutional reforms, was boycotted by all the nationalist elements during 1928. When the Commission visited Madras, the Police Commissioner succeeded in persuading some important leaders to abstain from leading demonstrations, and processions were banned along certain routes. Prakasam took up the challenge and led the procession with black flags along the banned routes, while some others chose safer routes

to lodge their protest. Milling crowds gathered in the vicinity of the High Court and on being obstructed from proceeding began to stone the police. The mounted police who could not hold back the surging crowd resorted to firing which resulted in the death of a person on the spot. Prakasam pushed his way towards the dead body and in the face of threats of firing bared his chest. Had he concentrated on public life at the national level, he could have become one of the greatest leaders of the country. But there are no ifs in history; the die was cast and he opted for provincial politics.

When the Congress legislators were called upon to resign as a prelude to the national struggle of 1930, Prakasam gave up his seat and successfully contested the bye-election and demonstrated his hold over the people irrespective of the party label. Soon after the salt satyagraha commenced, he resigned his seat in the Central Assembly and joined the national struggle forthwith, though his son Hanumantha Rao was laid up with a severe attack of small-pox and was tossing between life and death. Gathering round himself Nageswara Rao, Rangiah Naidu and Durgabai, he broke the salt law at Madras. He was first fined and his car was attached. Later he was sentenced to one year imprisonment. He secured a primary place in public life for successfully organising the national struggle in the metropolis, while other leaders confined themselves to mofussil centres. He actively participated and courted

imprisonment in all the subsequent national struggles led by Mahatma Gandhi.

As organisational chief and popular leader of the Andhra, Prakasam made Madras his headquarters. He was ably assisted in all his efforts and endeavours by the indomitable Sambamurty. These dauntless soldiers in the fight for *Swaraj* were such as to be rare separately and wonderful in combination. As long as they were together no one dared to raise his finger against them.

8

AS EDITOR OF 'SWARAJYA'

Every public movement requires the support of the fourth estate to make headway. To make the alien rulers heed a warning or appeal, the help of powerful journals in English was essential. The Andhras in particular had for long hungered for an English daily to champion their sub-national aspirations. 'The Hindu' belonged to the Tamilians and was, supporting the moderate point of view. While 'The Mail' was Anglo-Indian standing by the rulers, Besant's 'New India' faded away with the cessation of the Home Rule agitation. 'The Justice' was harping on casteism in the name of communal justice. It was necessary for journalism to become more a mission than a profession with risks, demanding extraordinary courage and sacrifice.

The demand for an English daily to espouse the Congress cause in the Gandhian era became insistent and Prakasam took the initiative. T. V. Venkatrama Iyer who gave up his legal practice and V. Venkateswara Sastry, a noted publisher, stood by him. K. Nageswara Rao agreed to pass on for cost price the Printing Press he had ordered earlier. A limited company was floated with three lakh rupees as share capital. Besides heavy investment by Prakasam, the public, irrespective of caste, creed and political persuasion, purchased shares enthusiastically out of respect for him. C. Rajagopalachari approved the scheme and named it 'Swarajya' and it was launched in October 1921.

'Swarajya' with Prakasam as working editor was justly proud that it started with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi. Its early history reads like a romance. In a couple of months, its circulation reached the encouraging figure of ten thousand. K. M. Panniker who was a young man returned from Oxford and popularly known as Kerala Putra in literary circles, and who after a spell of professional work in Aligarh took up the editorship, raised it to a level which it did not reach earlier or later. A man of culture with versatile abilities and political acumen, a historian and a writer of distinction, he shed lustre on the profession which he later left for its loss and to his gain. His meteoric rise in Princely India during its heyday and in free India as Ambassador to China both under the Kuomintang and

the Communists is a matter of history. There were on the staff of 'Swarajya' young men of calibre and character, Khasa Subba Rao and K. Ramakoteswara Rao who later became famous as founder-editors of 'Swatantra' and 'Triveni', respectively, and lived for them instead of living on them. For a time K. Rama Rao and K. Iswara Dutt, who conquered fresh fields and won laurels in the North, joined this band. G. Y. Krupanidhi whom C. R. Reddy described as the Bayard of India journalism, gave up his career at the bar to be with them. Though he was later happily placed in the realm of journalism at Delhi and Bangalore, he always recalled nostalgically his work in 'Swarajya'.

By 1923 due to differences of opinion with Prakasam, Rajagopalachari veered round to 'The Hindu', whose columns became highly hospitable to him. As an active politician, Prakasam could not bestow personal attention on the get up and upkeep of the newspaper. He had neither the organisational ability of Pattabhi Sitaramayya nor the business acumen of Nageswara Rao. It was thus far from being a prosperous concern. The young men who collaborated with him lacked neither ability nor devotion but the resources were unequal to the requirements of a daily. It had to face heavy weather and prompted Prakasam to make strenuous efforts to tide over the recurring crises. He visited Burma (now Myanmar), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Malaya (now Malaysia) to collect much-needed funds. Besides, he

spent what remained of his own fortune against the advice of colleagues and friends, with the sole ambition of keeping the paper going and the flag of the Congress flying.

Persons who worked, at one time or another, on the staff of 'Swarajya' were trained thoroughly in the school of suffering. They got salaries, often paid in installments and at uncertain intervals. But they had full freedom to function as they thought fit. Once Khasa Subba Rao refused to publish a speech delivered by Prakasam in the Central Assembly on the lot of postal employees on the ground that a man in whose office far worse conditions prevailed had no justification to shed tears over the grievances of others. The staff was there mostly out of personal loyalty bordering on devotion to the founder of the newspaper and remained firm Casabianca-like, sharing the stress and the distress.

'Swarajya' and Prakasam were inseparable. The newspaper owed its being to his single-handed labour and unparalleled personal sacrifices. People gave it money generously and without any expectation of reward. The public applauded its columns and admired its gallant fight. The newspaper suspended publication during the national struggle of 1930 when the Government demanded a security from it. It was revived after the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931 and stopped publication a little later. Unsuccessful attempts were made again to revive it in 1935.

Though Prakasam was the working editor, he refused to draw any salary or honorarium. On the other hand, he shared the miseries of his staff ungrudgingly. There were days when they did not have even a square meal and when they shared a single meal. Coffee was a luxury often denied them and they used to wait for any visitor with money in his pocket or credit in a neighbouring hotel. They had to walk to the office from their residence. Sometimes it became necessary to seek shelter in Prakasam's house to escape the rent collectors. At one time even barter was resorted to as a panacea to their ills. Ultimately, all of them fell victim to the consuming fire of the colossal venture.

Prakasam plunged headlong into the troubled waters of newspaper business and fell into the depths without a bubble of groan. For the sake of 'Swarajya' he ruined himself beyond redemption. The fact that in the process public money was thrown into the drain made no difference to the people in their esteem for him. His venture proved more than a mere adventure. He refused to think not only of the morrow but also of the hour. His struggles and sufferings in its cause constitute a memorable chapter in the history of Indian journalism. One must pay him homage for his phenomenal sacrifice in the cause of swaraj.

9 AS REVENUE MINISTER

Whenever there was discontent and agitation or otherwise, the British rulers followed a policy of repression and reforms. Soon after the suppression of the Indian War of Independence of 1857 came the conciliatory declaration of Queen Victoria. Consequent on the Vandemataram movement and the revolutionary upsurge on the partition of Bengal, the Morley-Minto reforms were introduced in 1909. Following the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Rowlatt Act and the Khilafat wrongs, the Montague-Chelmsford reforms based on dyarchy in the Provinces and extension of popular representation in the Central Legislature were introduced in 1920.

With the advent of Gandhi on the political scene, the national movement assumed a mass character and

faced repression in 1921, 1930 and 1932. Prolonged deliberations at the Round Table Conference in London led to the passage of the Government of India Act of 1935 through the British Parliament. General elections on an extended franchise based on literacy were held in 1937. As the party chief, Prakasam led the election campaign in Andhra with Sambamurty as his Secretary. The Justice Party, which wielded power and which was backed by the landed gentry and right reaction, gave a tough fight. The Raja of Pithapuram formed the People's Party with two dailies in English and Telugu, set up his own candidates and financed them. But Prakasam was not a man to be frightened. Lack of financial resources did not deter him. He carried on a whirlwind campaign covering every part of the Andhra area and received a tumultuous ovation wherever he went. He forgot food, dress and rest and was literally on his legs all the time moving from place to place.

People stood by him solidly. Even the then Chief Minister was defeated in his home constituency of Bobbili by V. V. Giri with a staggering majority in spite of the fact that Congressmen were not permitted to hold any meetings there and even those that were held with difficulty to be addressed by national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Sarojini Naidu were disturbed. The zamindars, barring the Raja of Challapalli, who was personally popular and belonged to the dominant caste of his area, were washed away. The Raja of Pithapuram

and his party were nowhere in the picture. The Justice Party could return to the legislature only a single candidate for the entire Andhra area. It was a tribute to Prakasam's untiring efforts and single-minded devotion.

Having won a clear majority in seven out of eleven provinces, the Congress successfully bargained for the necessary assurance regarding discreet exercise of special powers by the Governors in order to make provincial autonomy real and living. S. Satyamurty, who vigorously canvassed for Council entry and acceptance of office, was stuck up in the Central Assembly. C. Rajagopalachari rescinding his earlier decision to retire from politics came on the scene through the University Graduates Constituency. Efforts to bring back adroit Srinivasa Iyengar, who earlier had delivered a mortal blow to the Justice Party, did not bear fruit. Thus Prakasam had very good claims to head the Congress ministry by virtue of his seniority, sacrifice and election from the composite City of Madras. But C. Rajagopalachari was more acceptable to the High Command. In the larger interests of the country, Prakasam agreed to be the Revenue Minister in the Cabinet.

During the successive national struggles, a number of village officers had resigned their jobs and joined the movement. Prakasam got them reinstated in their original jobs in spite of the obstacles created by the bureaucracy. Similarly, collective fines imposed

during the national struggle were also refunded. When famine broke out in the Rayalaseema area, he rushed to the area and started famine relief works forthwith. Wherever crops failed, he granted remission on a liberal scale. With him there was no delay between a decision and its implementation. The rebel had become a great administrator.

The ryots who constituted the backbone of India had not received a fair deal under the British. The Government came on the scene annually as a tax-collector. The situation was worse in the zamindari areas. Though the zamindars were mere tax-collectors under the Permanent Settlement made by Cornwallis, they periodically enhanced rents and effected illegal evictions. The British rulers were interested only in the regular collection of their Peshkush and not in the welfare of the ryots. Prakasam always stood by the ryots. Earlier he had vigorously opposed the enhancement of taxes in the Krishna and Godavari deltas as a result of resettlement. N.G. Ranga and D. Narayana Raju had then assisted him in his efforts.

Soon after he became the Revenue Minister, he decided to overhaul the system of taxation in the zamindari area to the advantage of the ryots. The Zamindari Enquiry Committee came into existence, with himself as Chairman. Strenuous efforts were made to thwart the enquiry. Prakasam went to the root of the problem by studying the entire records on the subject. He toured

from place to place, gathered material and prepared a monumental report running into eighteen volumes. It was justly described as a *Mahabharata* since everything relating to the zamindaris was found in it and was a tribute to his prodigious industry and tenacity. He endeavoured to reduce taxation to the level that existed in 1802 A.D. The zamindars became restive and moved heaven and earth to thwart his efforts. Deputations were sent to the Congress High Command to suppress the report. Even the Governor advised Prakasam not to publish it but he retorted that the Committee was appointed by the Assembly, that he was bound to place it before it and that neither the Government nor the Ministry could stand in his way. When the Governor gave the Speaker Sambamurty similar advice, the latter as the trusted lieutenant of Prakasam gave it to understand that the copies of the report had already been circulated among the members of the Assembly. In the Party meeting Prakasam made it clear that he was living only for ameliorating the lot of the zamindari ryots. After the publication of the report, a draft bill was prepared. But before the Bill could be pushed through the legislature, the Ministry had to resign in 1939 as directed by the Congress High Command.

During the brief span of over two years as Revenue Minister, Prakasam functioned as the people's minister. He was readily available to one and all, heard them, patiently took notes, pursued the matter and redressed

just grievances. He often openly pulled up erring official. The Civil Services in India constituted the steel-frame on which the British administration rested. The joke that the members of Indian Civil Service were neither Indian nor civil inspired by the spirit of service became current. They opposed the introduction of reforms and when the reforms were introduced, retarded their implementation. Prakasam was stern to them and made them understand that they were servants of the people. When Hall, a member of the Board of Revenue, protested for being made to wait for an interview with him, he made him understand that the time of the Minister was more precious than that of the civil servant. It is no exaggeration to say that the people felt for the first time that they were sharing power and shaping their own destiny.

10 TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

Being a man of the people and wedded to action, Prakasam assumed presidentship of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee and galvanised its activities. But he is held to have committed an error in selecting Secretary Venkata Rao who was the right-hand man of Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Slowly but surely a group opposed to Prakasam came into existence within the organisation and began to grow steadily.

Prakasam was the first ex-minister in the South to offer individual satyagraha against the war effort in 1941. Soon after his release from prison, he rushed to Kakinada and Visakhapatnam where people were scared of Japanese bombings. He organised a volunteer corps to help the people during the emergency. After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Rajagopalachari

supported the demand for Pakistan and left the Congress. Sambamurty followed him upto a point, which resulted in his drifting away from Prakasam. After the adoption of the Quit India resolution by the Congress at Bombay in August 1942, he was arrested at Cuddapah while returning to Madras, kept in detention for over three years and then released in 1945.

Subsequently, he toured the entire State to explain the situation in the country to the people. He received a rousing reception everywhere and was presented with purses of which, with his usual indifference, he kept no accounts. Tales were carried against him to Mahatma Gandhi alleging misappropriation of funds. But the charges ultimately fizzled out as he had not used even a pie for his personal benefit. He successfully fought the elections to the Provincial Legislature in March 1946 and eliminated the Communists who had co-operated with the British rulers during the Second World War.

In Tamil Nadu, K. Kamaraj, a disciple of S. Satyamurty, was the popular Party chief. He did not permit Rajagopalachari who opposed the Quit India movement to rejoin the Congress. Rajagopalachari had to pay subscription for membership to the Congress President, Abul Kalam Azad. In the newly-elected State legislature, there were not only followers of Prakasam and Kamaraj but also admirers of Rajagopalachari and Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Gandhi's efforts to rehabilitate Rajagopalachari failed on account of the united front

presented by Prakasam and Kamaraj. Reaction proved to be stronger than action.

At the time of the election for leadership of the Congress legislature party, Kamaraj instead of backing Prakasam set up C. N. Muthuganga Mudaliar. But the neutrality of the followers of Rajagopalachari facilitated the election of Prakasam as leader. That led to his assumption of office as Premier of the composite State of Madras. But when he set up his trusted lieutenant T. Viswanatham for Speakership, Sivashanmukham Pillai, a Harijan, who was supported by the followers of Kamaraj and Rajagopalachari alike, defeated him. Thus Prakasam was in office without the necessary power and a host of pronounced and potential opponents.

However, it is significant that for the first time in the Gandhian era the credit of occupying a responsible position and wielding power against the wishes of Gandhi and the Congress High Command had gone to Prakasam. Earlier, stalwarts like K. F. Nariman, N. B. Khare and Subhas Chandra Bose who dared defy Gandhi and the High Command were made to leave the parent organisation. Prakasam's success against heavy odds was acclaimed as a triumph for democracy. He was neither frightened by dangers nor tired by labours and was indeed a shining star in the early days of freedom.

He constituted his cabinet in such a way as to be above criticism. Though the number was restricted to eleven, there was representation for Christians, Harijans

and women, at the same time keeping in mind regional and linguistic parties. While the members of his cabinet drew a salary of Rs. 1500 per month, he limited his salary to Rs. 1000. With a view to satisfying the longstanding desire of N. G. Ranga to be the party chief, Prakasam passed on the mantle to him without calculating the risks. The differences between them became pronounced with the passage of time. Ultimately, when both of them had to leave the Congress, each went his way, Prakasam to head the Praja Party and Ranga to organise the Krishikar Lok Party before the General Elections of 1952.

In spite of checks and counter-checks, restraints and limitations, Prakasam took a bold stand and implemented policies and programmes of a far-reaching character. He inaugurated Firka development, a precursor of community development, and introduced prohibition. To protect and popularise *Khadi* he refused to increase the quota of spindles to textile mills. He utilised the services of erstwhile national workers in indigent circumstances, set up producer-cum-consumer co-operative societies to eliminate exploitation by middlemen, and was keen on Panchayati Raj.

Since he was stern to the vested interests and lacked the necessary tact and spirit of accommodation essential for remaining in office, not to speak of exercising power, the forces of opposition gathered momentum. Men of an independent mind and creative capacity are often isolated and more often than not victimised. It is easy to

fight an enemy but not a 'Sikhandi'. Internal dissensions, intrigues and betrayals are more dangerous than external opposition. Prakasam's fall was similar to that of Karna in the *Mahabharata*. He was ousted from office by a majority vote at the party meeting. By a strange coincidence, the regime of his cabinet of eleven lasted only eleven months.

There was popular upsurge against Prakasam's dislodgement from office. While he was warmly received and heard by the public, the new set of ministers could not face it for sometime. Not content with it, Prakasam carried on a raging campaign against them and levelled charges of corruption against them. His repeated admonitions characterised by vigour, sweep, marshalling of facts and arguments in chosen diction proved a shock treatment for those who succumbed to the seduction of power. Why did he not take the defeat sportingly and bide his time? Love of power, it is said, is greater than love of wine, women and wealth put together. How could Prakasam be an exception? He might have sincerely felt that he alone could exercise power for the benefit of the people. One may overrate oneself, but it is not safe to underrate others, ignoring the logic of events. He was a democrat among aristocrats, an aristocrat among democrats, but never a despot.

Soon after the dawn of freedom, the Nizam of Hyderabad instead of acceding to the Indian Union desired to be independent with the support of the

Razakars. When the law and order situation on the Andhra borders became alarming, Prakasam, alone among the leaders, visited the disturbed area in spite of Nehru's warning and went unarmed into the camp of the Razakars who were armed to the teeth. While taking tea, he admonished them for oppressing innocent people instead of bravely facing the might of the Indian military. They were impressed with his courage of conviction and bold stand and accorded him a guard of honour in sheer admiration.

When the General Elections were held in 1952 on the basis of adult franchise, he took an active part with his Praja Party and saw to it that all the sitting ministers were defeated. Division in nationalist ranks led to the emergence of communists as a new force in the legislature. Though the Congress was returned as the single largest party, it did not command a majority to form a ministry. After his indirect election to the Upper House, Prakasam was elected the leader of the United Democratic Front consisting of all opposition groups with a minimum programme. Commanding a majority, he demanded the right to form the ministry. Many doubted the wisdom of his aligning himself with the Communists. He had often been on the losing side, sometimes on the wrong side but never on the side of wrong, as Gardiner said of Morley.

At this juncture, Rajagopalachari, who had already retired as Governor-General of India, was requested by

the Congress leaders in the State to save the situation. He was nominated to the Upper House by the Governor. Rajagopalachari formed the ministry without a majority, and summoning of the legislature was delayed by the obliging Governor which enabled the ministry to gather strength in the meantime. When the Governor came to address the Joint Session of the Legislature, Prakasam stood up with a militant mien in an emphatic tone and hurled thunderbolts of defiance at the Governor and walked out with his followers. That was his finest hour and as usual fate turned against him as the democratic front soon petered out and he was left alone. He was a good fighter but lacked statesmanship. Subsequently, a motion to censure his conduct was debated but later dropped in view of his stature and services. His triumphs often led to tragedies. As a hero he was indifferent to triumphs and tragedies alike. However, they constitute the purple patches and brilliant flashes in his great and tumultuous life.

11 AT THE HELM OF ANDHRA STATE

Provinces were not constituted during the British regime on any rational basis. They grew and multiplied as the rulers acquired one part of the country after another. The primary consideration was administrative convenience under a bureaucratic set-up. Even in a police State people cannot continue as chattels for long. Gradually sub-nationalism became vocal. The separation of Assam, Bihar and Orissa from Bengal paved the way. Mahatma Gandhi agreed to the formation of linguistic provinces as early as 1920 at the Nagpur Congress. It was believed that a linguistic State would safeguard the individuality of the cultural unit concerned and provide full opportunity for self-expression and proper development. But few foresaw that primitive loyalties would undermine nationalism ultimately. The

continued bickerings over boundaries, sharing of river waters and location of projects and industries between the various states are examples. The legion of regional non-official armies (Senas) that have sprung up to foster and promote parochial interests were proving a menace to national solidarity. There was also a clamour for more and more autonomy for the states, leading to the weakening of the Centre.

Historically speaking, language is not always a cementing factor. The English-speaking USA seceded from Britain, while Canada with a considerable French-speaking population chose to remain within the Commonwealth. The efforts of Sarat Chandra Bose to form a united and sovereign Bengal on the eve of Partition did not fructify. Sindhi Muslims opted for Pakistan. The Punjabis stand divided as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in spite of their common heritage of Urdu. The people of Vidarbha speaking Marathi are not reconciled to their inclusion in Maharashtra. The cry for a separate Telangana was another instance. There were not one but five Hindi-speaking states. The instances are merely illustrative.

One wonders whether the course of history is cyclical as the Greeks held or linear as the Christians and Muslims believe, or spiral as the ancient Chinese thought. There appears to be an altercation between progress and regression in which there is a series of oscillations between organic and creative periods.

Collective excitement is a sort of intoxication during which sanity, humanity and even considerations of self-preservation are easily forgotten. But the cultural soil of India is like a delta made up of many layers. The so-called cultural and linguistic units are not watertight compartments. The source of inspiration and sustenance is a common, composite culture, a common destiny and, above all, a common citizenship. It was demonstrated when China and Pakistan attacked the country and the nation rose as one man to the occasion.

The Andhras were among the first in India to demand self-determination. The Andhra Mahasabha founded in 1913 reiterated the claim year after year with stalwarts like B. N. Sarma, N. Subba Rao, K. Venkatappayya, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, K. V. Reddy Naidu, the Raja of Panagal, Prakasam and last but not the least S. Radhakrishnan as the principal spokesmen. The popular Ministry of Madras in 1938 endorsed the claim. During the Second World War it was put in cold storage. After the dawn of freedom, the claim for a separate Andhra State became insistent. The warnings of elder statesmen like Rajagopalachari, Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru and K.M. Munshi about the dangers of linguism were unheeded. Ultimately the J.V.P. (Jawaharlal, Vallabhbhai, Pattabhi) report supported the formation of Andhra State, in the first instance. But the delay in its implementation created doubts and fears, raised the pitch of agitation and led

to the fast unto death by the unassuming Gandhian, Potti Sriramulu. His tragic death on 16 December 1952 led to an unprecedented upsurge, disruption of communications and total *hartal* which brought life to a standstill. The situation went out of control and the writing on the wall became clear.

The Government of India, in spite of its initial opposition, had no option but to concede the demand and agree to the formation of a separate Andhra State forthwith. Rajagopalachari with the knack of anticipating events with alarming accuracy stated that his feelings were akin to those of sage Kanva on the eve of the departure of his foster-daughter, Shakuntala. C. M Trivedi, a seasoned civilian, was sent in 1953 with the status of a Special Officer to make the necessary arrangements and be the first Governor. Whatever the differences among leaders of the various parties in Andhra on other matters, they enthusiastically welcomed the formation of the new State. Many critical problems had to be tackled with vision and wisdom. Madras was lost to Andhra once for all. The chances of retaining it as a guest capital also vanished.

People of coastal Andhra wanted the capital of the new State to be located at a central place like Vijayawada which is fully developed culturally and commercially. Besides, it is the junction of railways and waterways with a fertile hinterland. It is also the nerve-centre of the rich and industrious Kamma community.

The Rayalaseema area, inhabited by Reddys with regal traditions and nobility, was originally reluctant to support a separate State fearing domination by better developed coastal Andhra. But under the Sri Bhag Pact of 1938 drafted by Pattabhi Sitaramayya and ratified by the leaders of Rayalaseema and the coastal area, in the event of not having Madras as the joint capital, the former were given the option to choose the capital or the High Court to be located in their area. Location of the capital is more beneficial to a backward area than that of the High Court. Further, the Reddys constituted the single largest community in the new State. Thus the contest for power between the Reddys and the Kammas became inevitable as envisaged much earlier by B.R. Ambedkar.

Someone had to tilt the balance to finalise and stabilise the fluid situation. Who else could do it but Prakasam? He was a tradition, a light and a spirit in his lifetime. His physical and spiritual frontiers did not coincide. Conflict raged between inclinations and convictions, principles and expendiency, the ultimate and the immediate. The occasion needed the wisdom of Agastya and the rectitude of Dharma-Putra. Prakasam strode across the scene with the steps of a colossus. Though he belonged to the coastal area, he thought it fit, in the larger interests of the State, to align himself with Rayalaseema and successfully espoused the claim of Kurnool to be the capital as a stop-gap arrangement

in spite of his being misunderstood and maligned by his supporters in coastal Andhra.

The Titan came on the scene in his own right by virtue of his age experience, services and sacrifice. He was out of the Congress. The communists were already ranged against him. The socialists led by P. V. G. Raju who had given him a safe seat to get into the Assembly earlier, drifted away from him. The void created by his exit from the Congress remained unfilled. Yet he was the State because his roots were among the people. Past grouses were forgotten and misunderstandings melted away. His dominance became inevitable. Prime Minister Nehru inaugurated the new State on 1 October 1953 and with intuition and prophetic vision installed octogenerian Prakasam as Chief Minister amidst popular acclamation. He became the pivot as well as the pilot of Andhra.

Till then Kurnool was the headquarters of a backward district with few amenities. As it was not possible to have the necessary permanent structures, accommodation was provided in tents. It was like a caravan on the move with Prakasam as the head. One wondered whether he saw a flame in the bush and a voice commanding him to lead his people like Moses. Whenever he raised his hand, everyone automatically obeyed as he was leading them to the promised land. The very first decision he took was to release all prisoners on the eve of the birth of the new State to enable one and all to share in

the rejoicings. Later the shrewd and astute Advocate General D. Narasa Raju had to use all his forensic skill to support the action against the charge of contempt of law and the courts.

In July 1954 he got the High Court of Andhra inaugurated at Guntur by the Home Minister, Kailash Nath Katju with K. Subba Rao as Chief Justice. This move satisfied the coastal Andhras as the High Court came within their easy reach. His vision and foresight conceived the idea of establishing a university at Tirupati named after the presiding deity, Sri Venkateswara, to fulfil the educational needs and aspirations of Rayalaseema. He boldly shelved the Krishna Pennar Project calculated to benefit Madras and took up the gigantic Nagarjunasagar scheme and commenced the construction of Krishna barrage with his usual nonchalance before the sanction of the Central Government was received. He was fully supported and ably assisted by his devoted lieutenant T. Viswanadham as Minister for Finance and Law and the Deputy N. Sanjeeva Reddy who later in a way became his political heir.

But his ministry had no clear majority. The communists with their destructive tactics constituted the main opposition. The Socialists were extending only halting support. The followers of Ranga led by G. Lachanna played a game of hide-and-seek and the ministry was ultimately toppled on the issue of prohibition. In the mid-term poll the United Congress Party got a clear

majority and B. Gopala Reddy, who had played a notable role in leading the Congress from the wilderness to success, succeeded Prakasam as Chief Minister in 1955. Prakasam too was elected to the State Assembly from his hometown of Ongole, defeating the Communist rival who had held the fort till then. On the recommendation of the States Reorganisation Commission presided over by Fazal Ali, the erstwhile Hyderabad State was dissolved and the Telangana portion of it was added to the Andhra area at the instance of its Chief Minister, B. Ramakrishna Rao, and in spite of some local opposition. Thus Andhra Pradesh was inaugurated on 1 November 1956 with Sanjeeva Reddy as Chief Minister. Prakasam was happy to witness the smooth succession of leadership. He was pleased when Sanjeeva Reddy ignored all pressures and made elder statesman A. Kaleswara Rao, Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh State Legislative Assembly, though he had ceased to have popular following by then.

In any age only a few are privileged to make or mar history. Of the former category who conceive great and noble things for the benefit of their fellow-beings, to fewer still is given the good fortune to see their ideals adequately realised during their lifetime. Prakasam was indeed such a distinguished and lucky person in contemporary India. On his palm was written the history of the Andhras for over half a century. He was a mighty stream absorbing all the currents and cross-currents of life.

just grievances. He often openly pulled up erring official. The Civil Services in India constituted the steel-frame on which the British administration rested. The joke that the members of Indian Civil Service were neither Indian nor civil inspired by the spirit of service became current. They opposed the introduction of reforms and when the reforms were introduced, retarded their implementation. Prakasam was stern to them and made them understand that they were servants of the people. When Hall, a member of the Board of Revenue, protested for being made to wait for an interview with him, he made him understand that the time of the Minister was more precious than that of the civil servant. It is no exaggeration to say that the people felt for the first time that they were sharing power and shaping their own destiny.

not flourish in the profession on account of his stern principles. He was an admirer of the social reformer, Veeresalingam Pantulu. Afterwards he fell out with his idol and criminal cases cropped up between them. He was interested in Journalism and edited two journals, one in Telugu called 'Vivekavardhani' and another in English known as 'Cornelian'. Suryakumari, the famous singer and film star, is his daughter.

Janakiramayya studied medicine, went to England later, took his F.R.C.S. from Edinburgh and worked there as a House Surgeon. During the First World War he joined the army and became an I.M.S. officer. Owing to some differences with his superiors in Mesopotamia, he resigned his assignment, returned to Madras and set up private practice. Later he developed interest in Homoeopathy and became an expert in that system of medicine.

Prakasam also educated his nephews, M. Narasimham and Subba Rao. He was affectionate to his sisters and their families. He celebrated the marriages of their children on a lavish scale. His residence was a veritable choultry (Dharmasala) for all his relations. He put up patiently with the nagging temperament of his wife Hanumayamma and tolerated all her idiosyncrasies. He carefully and constantly looked after her needs and comforts. She passed away in 1932. He had two sons, Narasimha Rao and Hanumantha Rao. They were not good at studies and could not settle down in life. Yet he

loved them, got them married, maintained them and was never harsh to them. His second son Hanumantha Rao acted as his Secretary while he was the Chief Minister. He was kind and considerate even to his distant kith and kin, was fond of old joint families characterised by simple life and mutual affection was nostalgic about this old order.

Genius for friendship is a gift. Its cultivation is an art and its retention is a rare good fortune. Aristotle rightly described two friends as a single soul in two bodies. Prakasam was ever grateful to Hanumantha Rao Naidu, who not only educated him but also moulded his character and career. Soon after he became Chairman of the Rajahmundry Municipality, he got Naidu appointed as Secretary of the Municipality. He rendered substantial financial assistance to Naidu and his family from time to time. When Naidu fell ill, he took him to Madras for expert treatment. His juniors at Rajahmundry and Madras were either sons or sons-in-law of his non-Brahmin friends. His friendships cut across communal, regional and religious barriers. Even the children and grandchildren of his friends commanded his affection and he invariably helped them for the mere asking and sometimes even without it. During his stay in prison, he learnt Tamil, Malayalam and Hindi with a view to reach the hearts of those who spoke those languages.

Above all, he was intensely human and humane. His generosity knew no bounds. He looked after the

comforts of those around him and sacrificed his own for their sake. Whenever he had money, his own or that of others, he parted with it without a thought of the morrow when a needy person approached him. It was with a view to discharging his obligations to family and friends that he resumed his legal practice in 1934 and indulged in it off and on. Though he was born poor and had experienced the pangs of poverty, he was neither attracted by money nor loved it.

He was kind and considerate even to those who let him down repeatedly. He never hit his opponents below the belt. When Pattabhi Sitaramayya contested the presidentship of the Congress session held at Jaipur, Prakasam volunteered his support in spite of their longstanding rivalry. Some of the nearest kith and kin of Pattabhi Sitaramayya were his staunch followers. While blood is thicker than water, loyalty to Prakasam proved stronger than blood. Everyone readily obliged him, knowing that he wanted nothing for himself. He freely mixed with the humblest workers and shared their joys and sorrows. When an admiring ryot offered him a pail of milk, he readily drank it on the spot to please him. Once he had to leave Madras urgently for Delhi and return *via* Bombay. There was not a pie in his pocket. He got into the train without a ticket in the company of a poor admirer. Spotting G. Narasimha Rao, a generous-hearted merchant, on the platform, he called him and explained the situation. On getting seven hundred

rupees from him, he immediately gave two hundred to his poor companion. Persons emptied their pockets for his sake with pleasure. Everyone felt at home in his company. Most of us have only houses and no homes; but he readily found a home everywhere.

Having the uncanny knack of spotting traits of leadership, Prakasam set up A. Satyanarayana Raju as a Congress candidate for the State Assembly, though he was an active Communist till then. Later Raju acquitted himself well as party chief in the State and Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee. While K. Brahmananda Reddy was still a young man of twenty-seven, Prakasam made him the President of the Guntur District Board. In the fitness of things, Brahmananda Reddy as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh recently constituted Ongole district and posthumously fulfilled the cherished desire of Prakasam.

Prakasam never liked to form a group of his own. He had a regal presence and a lordly manner like an ancient Roman patrician dominating gatherings. No one dared to attack him directly. He was more a patriot than a politician. The good causes he espoused were often lost by bad diplomacy. He was plain and blunt and preferred to talk straight and direct. He thought aloud and displayed the moral courage of admitting publicly what he thought and did privately. He thought as he felt and acted as he thought, detested double standards, and maintained his stance at any cost. He hated to shine

in the reflected glory of others and held his head high. Everyone swore by him and never swore at him. He thought for himself, not hesitating to oppose even the tallest adversary. He thought in a big way and acted in a grand fashion, never turned his back and marched forward. His friends were many and acquaintances quite a legion and he secured a permanent place in the hearts of the members of his family, friends and the wider public.

13 SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS VIEWS

Prakasam was attracted to social reform early in life and was an admirer of Veeresalingam who brought into vogue the much-needed social reform of widow-remarriage. When his youngest-sister Annapoorna lost her husband before consummation, he wanted to get her married again, but she passed away in the meantime. He was a good cosmopolitan, and at the same time was no blind worshipper of anyone. Veeresalingam filed a criminal case against Sriramulu (brother of Prakasam) for commenting on his character. Prakasam did not hesitate to cross-examine Veeresalingam at length and in detail for over five days and extracted damaging admissions from him. Though he was heterodox in his ways of life, he was neither critical nor intolerant of orthodoxy. He was ever loyal to the motto of unity

in diversity. Tolerance is the homage which the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the infinite. In spite of youthful indiscretions and irregular life, he respected character and fidelity and endeavoured to mould his life accordingly. He was not opposed to cherished traditions that had withstood the test of time. If we are not to lapse into individual rationalism and ultimate negation, if we are to avoid whims and be guided by the accumulated wisdom of the past, we require tradition to sustain us. But tradition is ever-growing and responsive to changing circumstances and provides a source of correction and enrichment.

Though Prakasam was invested with the sacred thread (Upanayanam) at the age of five, he never bothered himself with ceremonial conformity and ritual piety. Since philosophy was a no man's land between theology and rationalism, he felt attracted to it as a rebel. If poetry points out to us the beauty our untaught eyes missed, philosophy gives us wisdom to understand and to forgive. It is harmonised knowledge lifting its votary to the heights of serenity and freedom, an intellectual enquiry and a rational investigation converting an intellectual proposition into a life's conviction.

Prakasam regarded philosophy as essentially practical dealing as it does with the fundamental anxieties humanity which are more insistent than abstract speculation. For him religion meant courage and

adventure, not resignation and fatalism. In Upanishadic literature, the highest stage envisaged is that of *Abhaya* (fearlessness). After the successful termination of the philosophical discourse, the great sage Yagnavalkya told King Janaka that he had reached *Abhaya* (fearlessness). Prakasam lived up to this ideal throughout his life. He was indeed a practical philosopher. He rightly called his autobiography *Pilgrimage of Life.*

During his long period of imprisonment for three years when he was past the Biblical age of three score and ten, he learnt Sanskrit and wrote popular commentaries on Prasthanatrayam, i. e., the *Bhagavad Gita,* the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. This period of communion with the supreme world of the spirit was perhaps the happiest interlude in his crowded and colourful life. S. Radhakrishnan once confessed that he was far more thrilled by his work on the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras than all pomp and secular glory. The crown of Vedanta is not an abstraction but an experience. Knowledge is realisation. One cannot transcend world without walking through it with a cosmic perspective. Prakasam lived up to this ideal and believed in God and had firm faith in destiny.

He was not learned in religious lore in a pedantic sense. But our society in every generation produced men and women whose daily life helped to civilise us, and his place was beside them. Though he liked the good things of life, he was not a slave to them.

The truly religious live and work for humanity in their chosen field, irrespective of results. They do not retire or withdraw into their shells. Their affections are not constrained or canalised by narrow considerations. They are the essence of all that is noble, good and true. When the common man becomes the moral man, a community of mind with universal loyalty is created. The realm of the spirit is the sphere of freedom. It does not favour or penalise the acceptance of any religion. It possesses a new kind of creative sympathy. By these tests Prakasam, was truly religious.

14

THE END OF JOURNEY

Prakasam had a well-built body with a strong constitution and sound health. He rarely fell ill and loathed lethargy. In the evening of his life, Sanjeeva Reddy as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh proved to be more than a son to him and looked after his comforts and the welfare of his family. The Government of Andhra Pradesh in collaboration with the Central Government wisely sanctioned an allowance of Rs. 750 per month to him and also put a car at his disposal. It is indeed a gesture of gratitude to the hero who had sacrificed his all in the freedom struggle. The secret of such recognition is that his name is still a battle-cry.

Gradually ill-health, advancing years and the incidental infirmities overtook him. He was admitted to the Osmania General Hospital at Hyderabad where the

best treatment was made available to him. His last days reminded one of the legendary Bhishma on the bed of arrows waiting for the auspicious time. Ultimately he passed away peacefully on 20 May 1957. His body was kept in State at the Gandhi Bhavan to enable one and all to pay their last respects. His intimates like T. Viswanadham, A.B. Nageswara Rao, T.V.S. Chelapathi Rao and K. Linga Raju were overwhelmed and felt orphaned.

In the fitness of things, Prakasam was given a State funeral. Chief Minister Sanjeeva Reddy and his right-hand man, Satyanarayana Raju, accompanied by high-ranking dignitaries, followed the bier in all solemnity and sorrow. The funeral procession was mile long. The cremation-ground at Amberpet looked like Rajghat. All India Radio gave a running commentary on the last rites. It was one of the saddest days in the history of Andhra Pradesh. It can be truly said of him that

'His life's race was well run
His life's work was well done
And his life's crown was well worn.'

P. V. Rajamannar, the Chief Justice of Madras, associating himself with the reference made before him, remarked that Prakasam was not a mere Andhra Kesari but deserved to be designated as Bharat Kesari. He had no worthy predecessor in Andhra and it is doubtful whether there will be a worthy successor ever.

One is tempted to apply to him the following lines of Rudyard Kipling:

'If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster,
And treat those two impostors just the same;
And lose and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe about your loss;
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings, nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Youth is the earth and everything that is in it,
And which is more, you will be a man, my son.

15

IN RETROSPECT

Some are born great, others have greatness thrust upon them; a few achieve greatness against heavy odds by sheer merit, ability, integrity and character. Prakasam must be placed in the third category. Though born poor, he was never frightened by poverty. While earning much and rolling in luxury, he voluntarily chose poverty and suffering in the service of the country. The secret of his tremendous hold over the masses and classes alike was his selfless service and sacrifice. His mistakes and failures did not affect the people's esteem and affection for him. To the strength of a giant and the courage of a lion, he added the gentleness of a lamb. Individuals become great not by what they gather but by what they give away. Prakasam's gift to the country is not any particular political or social programme but his shining

personal example of service and sacrifice, courage and constancy.

During the British regime, official titles and distinctions were badges of slavery. Gokhale declined a knighthood. Poet Tagore renounced it as a protest against the massacre of innocents at Jallianwala Bagh. But titles conferred by the people are twice blessed. In this respect, the place of the Andhra Kesari is by the side of Lokamanya Tilak and Deshabandhu C. R. Das. Though Prakasam was against erection of statues during a man's life-time, his admirers were in no mood to hear him. His statue was unveiled at Vijayawada in 1951 by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, who resembled him in many ways. More than a decade after he passed away, the D.M.K. Government of Tamil Nadu thought it fit to erect his statue in front of the High Court at Madras where he displayed his unparalleled heroism during the boycott of the Simon Commission. There is also his statue in Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh. Governor Khandubhai Desai unveiling his statue at Tirupati described him as 'Hind Kesari'.

The number of colonies, buildings, parks, roads, bridges and barrages named after him is legion. His birth anniversary is celebrated year after year with great enthusiasm at various centres. His memory is ever fresh in the public mind. The Andhra University conferred a doctorate for a thesis on his life and work.

The lives of those who sacrificed everything in the freedom struggle are like a song and their tunes linger in our ears long after they have ceased. They have become part of the past which creeps into the present and forms part of the future. Their words and deeds are not shadows but find a permanent place in the hearts of the people and form an indivisible part of the personality of the Indian nation. To those who give up everything in the service of the country, posterity owes a deep debt.

Many of the giants of the national struggle are forgotten today. It is, however, in our national interests to recognise their services. A nation that forgets past heroes and honours only those who happen to stand upon the contemporary stage suffers from lack of inspiration and faces the risk of sudden upheaval and change. It will be a sign of political immaturity if the services of the stalwarts who built up the nation and gave direction and strength to the national movement are forgotten and the younger generation of today grows up without knowledge of their contributions. In this context, the life and work of Prakasam deserve to be cherished with pleasure and pride as generations yet inborn can draw many useful lessons from them.

'Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.'

—H. W. Longfellow

P RAJESWARA RAO

P Rajeswara Rao was educated at Benaras, Calcutta and Patna and was an advocate and freelance journalist. He took part in the salt satyagraha movement in 1930 and was imprisoned. He is the author of *Indian Constitutionalism and Indian Art.*

To commemorate the 75 years of India's independence, National Book Trust, India under the *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*, Government of India programme has launched a new publishing series *India@75* for young and general readers. The books under this series will reflect the momentous, yet wonderful journey of India. As part of the series, books on freedom fighters, major achievers and events/themes that have shaped the modern India are being developed.

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